

Report

Pea Ridge National Military Park

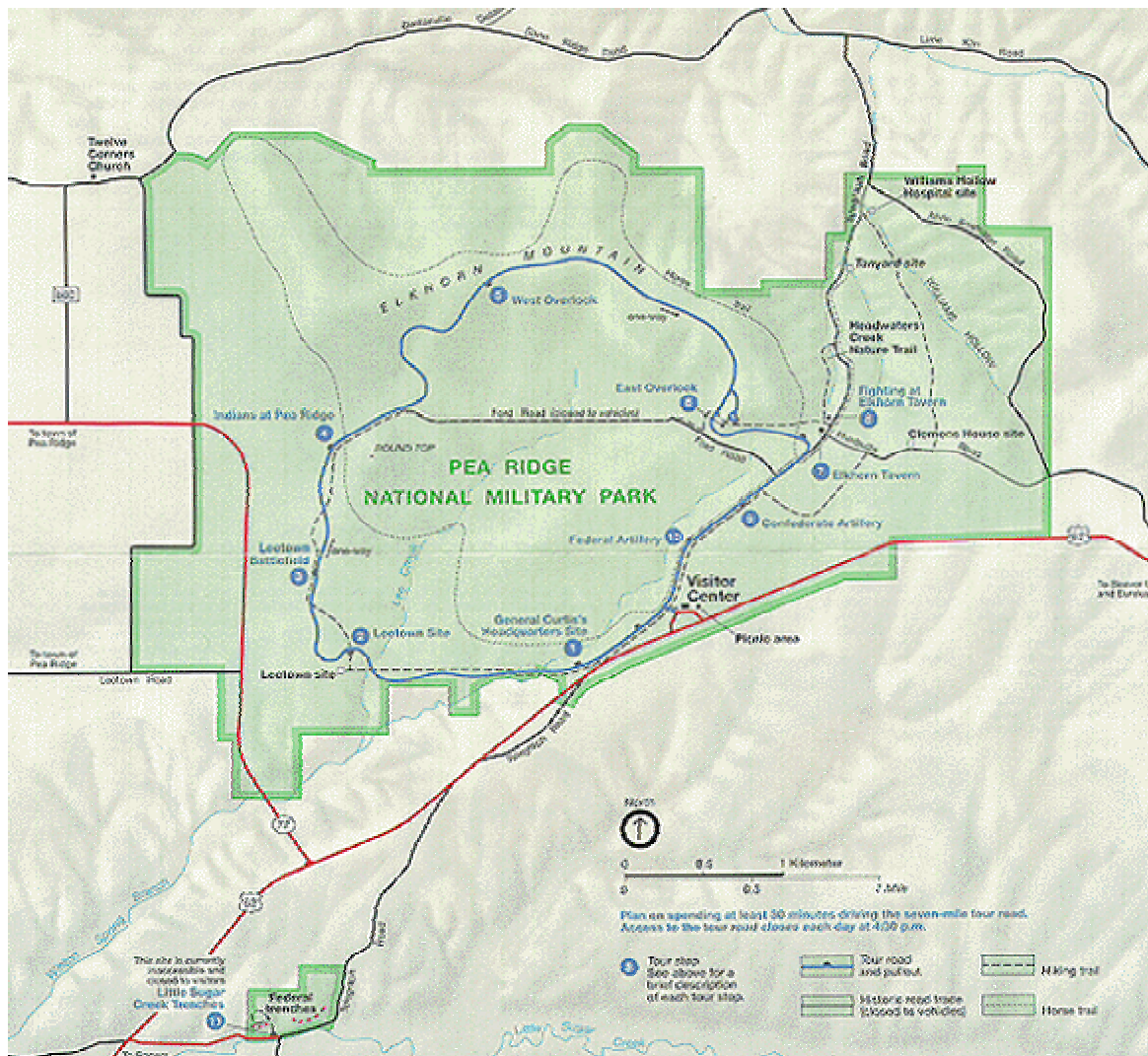
■ 1.0 Site Description

The Pea Ridge National Military Park (NMP) was authorized as a National Park Site on July 20, 1956, to commemorate the Civil War Battle of Pea Ridge, fought for control of the state of Missouri, on March 7th and 8th, 1862. Pea Ridge NMP is located just a few miles south of the Missouri state line in Arkansas, approximately 80 miles southwest of Springfield, Missouri, 90 miles northeast of Fort Smith, Arkansas, and 120 miles east of Tulsa, Oklahoma. The town of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, is the nearest human settlement to the park, approximately five miles to the west.

The park encompasses a large main area where the actual fighting took place; and a smaller area, the site of federal troop trenches, separated from the main park and currently closed to the public due to safety concerns about inadequate facilities. The total area of the park is 4,300 acres. Most of the acreage is federally owned, with the exception of 21.25 acres.

Visitors may access the park from U.S. 62. The Visitor Center and museum are situated near the entrance to the park. A seven-mile loop tour road allows visitors to access sites of historical interest by automobile. These sites include the following:

- General Samuel R. Curtis' Federal Headquarters Site.
- The site of the now abandoned hamlet of Leetown, where both federal and confederate wounded were taken for treatment.
- The Leetown Battlefield Site, where the attacking confederate forces failed to defeat the federal army, and lost Generals Ben McCulloch and James McIntosh.
- The site where the Cherokee Indians, the first American Indian force to participate in the war, and fighting on the side of the confederates, were deployed.
- The West and East Overlooks on top of Pea Ridge, which give the best views of the battlefields.
- The Elkhorn Tavern Battlefield Site, where attacking confederate forces pushed defending federal troops back one-half mile before running out of ammunition, forcing them to retreat. A reconstruction of the Elkhorn Tavern stands on the site.
- Confederate and federal artillery sites, facing each other on either side of the visitor road.

Figure 1. Pea Ridge NMP Site Map

Horseback and hiking trails have also been provided. The Clemens House Site, the Tanyard Site, and the Williams Hollow Hospital Site are accessible only on foot, or by horse.

The park is open year-round, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, with the exceptions of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. The annual visitation average for the previous eight-year period was over 92,000. The peak visitation months are in late spring and early summer (May, June, July) and in October, when the Ozark Forests turn colors. Weekends and holidays are the busiest days. Most visitors typically spend one to two hours at the site, although horseback riders, bicyclists, and hikers may stay up to a full day at the site.

A General Management Planning Process is just getting underway for the park. A number of issues to be addressed have been identified:

- Replacement of the 1963 Master Plan with a relevant policy document that gives direction for making management decisions in the face of the rapid development changes occurring near the park.
- The possibility of moving U.S. 62 and SH 72 right-of-ways off of park property, to improve access; increase safety for motorists, trucks, visitors, and wildlife; reduce trespassing and dumping on park grounds; and to diminish auditory and visual impacts on historically significant sites.
- Improving deteriorating buildings, constructing new facilities, and upgrading resources and services.
- The restoration of the Little Sugar Creek Federal Trenches area which has been closed to the public for 12 years due to a steep trail in poor condition.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

No Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) services, other than trails for horseback riding and hiking, currently exist.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

ATS needs identified for Pea Ridge NMP include:

- The possibility of using a shuttle bus system to transport visitors during well-attended special interpretive events;
- Separation of automobile and bicycle modes of transport along the seven-mile loop tour road; and
- Expanded parking facilities for horse trailers at the trailhead.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

Pea Ridge NMP experiences periods of through traffic, access, and parking congestion during well-attended special interpretive events. The majority of these events are held in the area of the Elkhorn Tavern, which is surrounded by woods, and therefore constrained in terms of parking expansion. Currently, parking must be accommodated on a portion of the actual battlefield site itself, which is subject to erosion. A shuttle bus system running from the Visitor Center, where expanded parking facilities could be more easily

accommodated, to the site of the special event, may be a desirable alternative. The removal of autos and parking facilities from the event site would also improve the visitor experience by improving the historical accuracy of the visitor environment and experience.

A growing number of bicyclists, including children on tricycles, are sharing the seven-mile loop tour road with automobiles, which is a safety concern. A separate bicycle trail adjacent to the roadway would improve both safety and the visitor experience for both motorists and bicyclists.

Horseback riding is an activity that has also been increasing in frequency at the park. At this time, horse trailers must be parked in a small field at the trailhead. A parking facility designed for these vehicles may enhance and ultimately increase this activity at the park.

■ 5.0 Bibliography

Facsimile to Stephen E. Adams. November 19, 1999.

Facsimile to Mary Davis. November 29, 1999.

“General Management Plan Issues.” Internet site: <http://www.nps.gov/peri/GMP.htm>. Information printed November 19, 1999.

Pea Ridge National Military Park. Internet site: <http://www.nps.gov/peri>. Information printed November 19, 1999.

“The Sentry.” Internet site: <http://www.nps.gov/peri/thesen~1.htm>. Information printed November 19, 1999.

Pea Ridge National Military Park. “Pea Ridge Official Map and Guide.” GPO: 1998-432-903/60312 Reprint 1998.

■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Mary Davis. Telephone interview. November 1999